



# *Snohomish County* **Council on Aging**



## **Senior Centers Full Committee**

Northshore Senior Center

October 8, 2015

9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

**SENIOR CENTER DIRECTORS:** Ferrell Fleming (Edmonds), Bob Dvorak (Snohomish), Keith Yarter (Stanwood), Annie Nygaard (Mountlake Terrace), Marc Avni (East County), Deb Loughrey-Johnson (Everett), Terry Schuler (Mill Creek), Christina Robertson (Stillaguamish Rep), Danette Klemens (Northshore), Alma Ohtomo (Edmonds BOD).

**COA MEMBERS:** Nora Todd (Chair), Ellen Kinney, Angela Martin, and Ann Kelleher.

**STAFF AND GUESTS:** Martha Peppones (SSSC), Carol Wheeler (SSSC), Maureen Britt (SSSC), Susie Starrfield, Danielle Maiden.

After welcome and introductions, Martha Peppones, Senior Services of Snohomish County spoke to the group about the services and program guidelines of the Congregate Meal Program. She described the goals of the program which include decreasing hunger and increasing social interaction, promoting health and wellbeing through access to other services and delaying the onset of adverse health conditions. Because of the Older American Act funding for the program the focus for the program is reaching out the most vulnerable people in our communities. The Congregate Program process is: the menu is planned by nutritionists at SSSC, decide based on numbers reported by the sites how much of what food goes to each site and order food through Food Services of America, once the food is delivered to SSSC- staff distributes the goods to each site to be prepared by the on-site cook. She also stated the historically the programs participants have been 70+ in age with very low participation from the 60-70 year olds. Martha let the group know that the program will be switching from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the 1/3 Dietary Reference Intakes measurement to the Meal Pattern Based Analysis. These guidelines will most likely take effect in early 2016.

There has been an 11% decrease over the last four years in the Snohomish County Congregate Programs, with increases in participation at the Center for Healthy Living (CHL) and the Stillaguamish sites (It is believed the high participation at the CHL is not because of the food, they come for activities, social engagement and social services). Nationally there was a 10% drop from 2008-2013 and most likely the percentage is higher than that if more recent years included. 93% of respondents in the Congregate Program Survey report that the program is excellent or good. SSSC would like help from Senior Center Directors to reach out to individuals who do not currently use the meal program to reach out to through focus groups to try to find ways to interest them in the program.

Martha informed the group that changes have been made to the operations of program from the feedback provided by the Directors and cooks. Instead of putting all items for the sites in one box and then loaded into the refrigerated delivery truck, the produce will now be delivered separately in the back of the truck where it has much less of a risk of arriving at the site frozen. Because of the feedback on providing more items from scratch, the program will provide a food processor for those sites that do not currently have one on hand. Having a food processor should make the

process of using whole items instead of processed items easier and should decrease the amount of spoilage arrival at meal sites.

The main challenge for the program is financial. SSSC currently subsidizes \$150,000 beyond OAA, United Way and other funding. Expenses are quite high because fewer meals are being served. Average expense for a meal currently is \$8.75 when the average donation per meal is \$1.32. Through monitoring of site locations Danielle noticed that 4/6 sites she monitored did not have any signage encouraging donations or information for participants of the suggested donation amounts for age groups. Another issue is "lost meals" running at a county average of 11% with a range of sites having a 4% loss average all the way up to 24% loss. If ¼ of all meals served are not accounted for, the meals get expensive quickly. Without proper tracking of the folks eating the meals and requiring a signature, the program does not get reimbursed by its funding source. If the lost meal percentages came down and SSSC was reimbursed at a higher rate, there would be more funds to go towards quality products to be served.

Suggestions from the group on changes that could be made to improve the overall program:

- Look at different model to do other things such as offering a salad bar, which requires getting investment in bar with sneeze guard. Senior Centers could apply for grants together to cover equipment investment costs.
- Look at no longer using trays, use plates and silverware for meals (requires more volunteers to do clean up), rearrange dining area to resemble more of a restaurant style including more 2-4 top tables or replacing rectangular tables with round tables. Possibly have light music playing or TV in the area to provide entertainment and a welcoming environment.
- May be good to have dietary information for the menu items available/posted at the meal site.
- Have a soup/salad alternative option for participants on all days of the week.
- Have a greeter available at the meals to talk with participants to encourage a welcome/warm environment.

Martha requested that the Director's schedule at time with her individually to discuss changes to each sites programs as they are each unique in their needs.

The Director's had a brief roundtable to report on upcoming events.

Danielle reminded Director's that 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter reports are due on October 15, 2015.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 by Nora Todd

Next Full Meeting: December 10, 2015 at the Carl Gipson Senior Center, Everett.